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THE GATE OF PRAYER.

HAVING been employed one evening in reading the first part of the 11th chapter of Luke, which contains various excellent directions and pleasing encouragements relative to the duty of prayer, I leaned back on my sofa, and indulged my contemplations. I fancied that I was standing opposite a large and ponderous gate, which was the outward entrance to the palace of the King of the country. At the top of this gate I observed the following inscription, written in large golden characters, '*Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*' I felt desirous to do this, but resolved first to notice the manner in which others might act.

I had not waited long before I saw a gay gentleman, elegantly dressed, approaching in a beautiful phæton. He staid for a few moments; but on reading the inscription, he exclaimed, 'I have no inclination to knock, or to enter this gate; I am too much engaged, and I think all the beauties of the palace would not repay my trouble,

if I were to go and examine them.' Saying this, he dashed away down the broad road which was opposite.

The next person I observed was a man of demure appearance, who seemed to possess an affected gravity of countenance. He went up to the gate in a fearless manner, and appeared secure of admission; for he said that he knew the porter at the gate, that he had associated with many who had been to the King's palace, and had received many proofs of his Majesty's kindness. He therefore called out to the porter, and desired him to open the gate for one who was a friend to the King, and who was well known to many of his best servants and officers. To this request, which was repeatedly made, no answer was returned, and, at length, he departed from the gate, disappointed and confounded.

The third person who attracted my attention, marched up to the gate with an elevated mien and confident step, as if he possessed a right to enter, and was conferring a favor on the Prince by approaching his mansion. He read the inscription on the gate; but, seeing that the knocker was towards the bottom, and that he must stoop to reach it, he resolved to content himself with striking the door with a stick which he held in

his hand ; but he could not obtain admittance, and went away with indignation.

When I observed these unsuccessful attempts, I was much discouraged, and thought that it was useless for me to try ; I was therefore going to depart ; but, on looking up to the gate, I saw the inscription written so plainly, and signed by the seal manual of the King, that I resolved to stay a little longer.

Soon a pilgrim appeared journeying towards the gate. His eye was fixed intensely on the inscription ; but he was not sufficiently careful in choosing his way, so that he often stumbled. He knocked at the gate, and it was immediately opened ; but, in his hurry, he fell down, and it was shut by the porter, who said to him, ' Watch and pray.' However, he knocked again, and being more careful, was then admitted.

I next noticed a poor weary beggar, almost destitute of clothing, and nearly perishing with hunger. When he came to the gate, his eyes glistened with pleasure at reading the inscription. He kneeled down on the ground, and took hold of the knocker ; but on looking at himself, and seeing his unworthy condition to appear before his Lord, I saw tears drop from his eyes ; but he soon wiped them off, and resolved, ' If

I must perish, I will perish in the act of seeking admittance.' So he lifted up the knocker, and gave a rap, when the gate was immediately opened, and he was admitted with many cheerful welcomes, while he exclaimed, 'Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord: this gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter. I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation,' Psa. cxviii. 19—21.

After this, I beheld another person somewhat similar to the former, though he possessed much more boldness. He continued knocking for a long time without any success; but he was not discouraged, and repeated his efforts with ardor and importunity. While he was thus employed, and appeared to meet with no success, he pulled from his bosom a scroll, and read these words aloud: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you,' John xvi. 23. 'Yes,' exclaimed the pilgrim, 'these are the precious words of my Divine Redeemer, who shed his blood on the cross for my salvation, and who is now exalted to heaven as my great Intercessor. Then he turned to his scroll, and read, 'We have

not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need,' Heb. iv. 15, 16. As he read these words, he lifted his eyes to heaven, the tears rolled down his cheek, and he grasped the knocker, and made the gate resound again and again. Still he appeared to be unnoticed, the gate remained close shut. He seemed to hesitate for a moment, his knocks became fainter; but he again pulled out the scroll from his bosom, and read, 'Men ought always to pray, and not to faint,' Luke xviii. 1. 'Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you,' 1 Thess. v. 17, 18. As he read these words, he knocked with still greater energy and importunity. At length he obtained a happy entrance, when he cried out, 'This is the gate of heaven,' Gen. xxviii. 17.

On again looking round me, I beheld at some distance a trembling traveller advancing towards the gate. As he approached, he was accosted by a man of a haggard look, and a frightful countenance, who told him it was of no use for him to seek admittance;

because such a person as he was would not only be refused, but be punished for his audacity. The traveller made no answer, but continued his course. Soon after he was solicited by one with whom he was formerly intimate, to go with him down the broad road opposite; and on his refusal, he was reproached and abused. When he arrived at the gate, and was about to knock, he began to feel his courage failing, and many fears arose in his mind, lest he should be refused admittance: he was almost inclined to depart; but when he looked at the glorious promise just above him, and saw that a strong light from heaven seemed to shine upon it, he took courage; he knocked, and was immediately received. He arose from his knees with comfort and joy, and triumphed over all his enemies and all his difficulties.

Having witnessed these pleasing scenes, I resolved to apply for admission without any further delay. I accordingly went up to the gate, and gave so loud a knock, that it roused me from my slumber. I was then enabled to reflect on the folly of neglecting prayer; on the sin of performing this duty in a hypocritical, proud, or unwatchful manner; and, also, on the benefits of an humble, importunate, and faithful spirit of devotion. Blessed are those who watch daily at the gate

of prayer, and wait at the posts of her door. They shall be received into the presence of their God, and shall obtain eternal happiness, through Jesus Christ, 'the way, the truth, and the life.'

PRAYER.

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Utter'd or unexpress'd ;
The motion of a hidden fire,
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try ;
Prayer, the sublimest strains that reach
The Majesty on high.

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air ;
His watchword at the gates of death ;
He enters heaven by prayer.

Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice,
 Returning from his ways ;
 While angels in their songs rejoice,
 And say, " Behold, he prays ! "

The saints in prayer appear as one,
 In word, and deed, and mind ;
 When with the Father and his Son
 Their fellowship they find.

Nor prayer is made on earth alone ;
 The Holy Spirit pleads ;
 And Jesus, on the eternal throne,
 For sinners intercedes.

O Thou, by whom we come to God,
 The life, the truth, the way :
 The path of prayer thyself hast trod ;
 Lord, teach us " how to pray "

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